

2002 HOLIDAY Message



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During the holidays, families gather to share in the celebrations of the season. Our Army family is unique — among us, we share a special bond, a common understanding of the inherent sacrifices and hardships of being an Army family. So we are additionally blessed to be able to celebrate our special heritage — the legacy of hope that our Soldiers represent to the Nation.

On a bitter-cold Christmas night in 1776, General George Washington and his Continental Army crossed the Delaware River to execute a bold plan against the British forces. Driving sleet and snow made the freezing temperatures all the more unbearable. Despite those harsh conditions, the Soldiers did not complain — some of them had no shoes; some wrapped rags around their feet to help keep them warm; still others remained barefoot. As one of General Washington's staff officers recorded, the Soldiers were "ready to suffer any hardship and die rather than give up their liberty." In the most difficult conditions, against the greatest odds, the Soldiers performed magnificently, and their victory in the Battle of Trenton the day after Christmas renewed the hopes of freedom in the American Revolution.

And undiminished still today is that same spirit of determination, perseverance, selfless service and courage that moved the Soldiers of the Continental Army on Christmas night in 1776. We share in the enduring legacy of those who first fought and died to win our freedom — we stand on the shoulders of the brave men and women who have preceded us.

We know that we do not soldier alone. With each of our Soldiers on point in more than 120 countries around the globe is the spirit of a tremendous family — a family whose courage, sacrifice, and steadfastness are inspiring to us all. And all of our efforts, all of our successes, all of our magnificent moments as an Army will continue to be delivered by our people — Soldiers, civilians, veterans, retirees, and all of their families. We are grateful for their commitment, their loyalty, and their devotion.

We could not be more proud of all of you and of the magnificent work you do each and every day to preserve the gifts of hope and of freedom that we cherish. May you have a safe, fulfilling, and joyful Holiday Season and a prosperous New Year. God bless each of you and your families, God bless The Army, and God bless this great Nation.

Eric K. Shinseki
General, United States Army
Chief of Staff

Thomas E. White
Secretary of the Army

